



# Al-Risala 1992

June

## Editorial

The collapse of the Soviet economy in The USSR vis a vis the continuance of the capitalist economy in the free world is the direct result of its being unworkable as a system. Capitalism, on the other hand, has proved workable despite its many inherent faults.

One of the reasons for the socialist economy being unworkable was pointed out long ago by economists such as Frederic Van Hayek, who held that the coordination of the transactions of hundreds of producers and consumers, the distribution of goods and the organization of services could be done only by the market and not by the planners. Any attempt on the part of the planners to assume competence in solving the simultaneous equations relating to hundreds of goods and services was doomed to fail. (*Indian Express*, Jan 12, 1992).

What has kept the capitalist economy alive is the fact peculiar to its system, that supply is controlled by demand. This particular feature ensures that the market is never faced with the kind of severe shortages of consumer goods such as have rendered the socialist system almost intolerable and ultimately caused it to be overthrown by the people. What has dismantled the Soviet Union is not some external plot, but its own internal weakness.

Although the capitalist society has survived on the strength of supply meeting demand, it is nevertheless, plagued by unrest. This is because the demands of human nature are such as cannot be satisfied merely by adequate supplies of consumer goods.

Jesus Christ said that "man can not live by bread alone", by which he meant that man has spiritual as well as material needs. If the latter is a human necessity, the former is the purpose of his life. Regardless of the scale on which material necessities are provided for, this can never be a substitute for the fulfillment of a spiritual need.

The present capitalist society may appear to be strong because of its solid economic base, but it nonetheless has a major weakness - the lack of an ideology which can bring fulfillment to a man's total personality.

An explanation of the universe, man's place in it, and in human history, is a basic human requirement. Man cannot live without such explanation, and it is only a correct ideology which can furnish it. In the absence of such an ideology, man opts perforce for a set of ideas which is artificial, misconceived and: therefore, pernicious.

Despite all its absurdity, communism ostensibly provided the world with a complete philosophy. It was not understood at that time that what it had, in actuality, done was provide man with a false set of convictions; capitalism's only role was to provide the structure of a workable economy; it did not

pretend to provide a complete philosophy of life. With the collapse of communism, the ideological vacuum has, therefore, become an acute, universal problem.

This vacuum on both fronts has given hitherto unparalleled scope to religion, latter having no rival in the ideological field. It is now, in consequence, in a position of unopposed supremacy.

Due to human interpolations in religious texts, the world's religions – with the exception of Islam – are neither in accordance with human nature, nor do they enjoy historical credibility. This newly created opportunity for religion to reassert its moral credentials is, therefore, clearly in favour of Islam alone. Born in the full light of history, with its tenets enshrined in the Qur'an, a Holy Book remarkably free of human interpolations, Islam enjoys historical credibility as the sole authentic form of past religions.

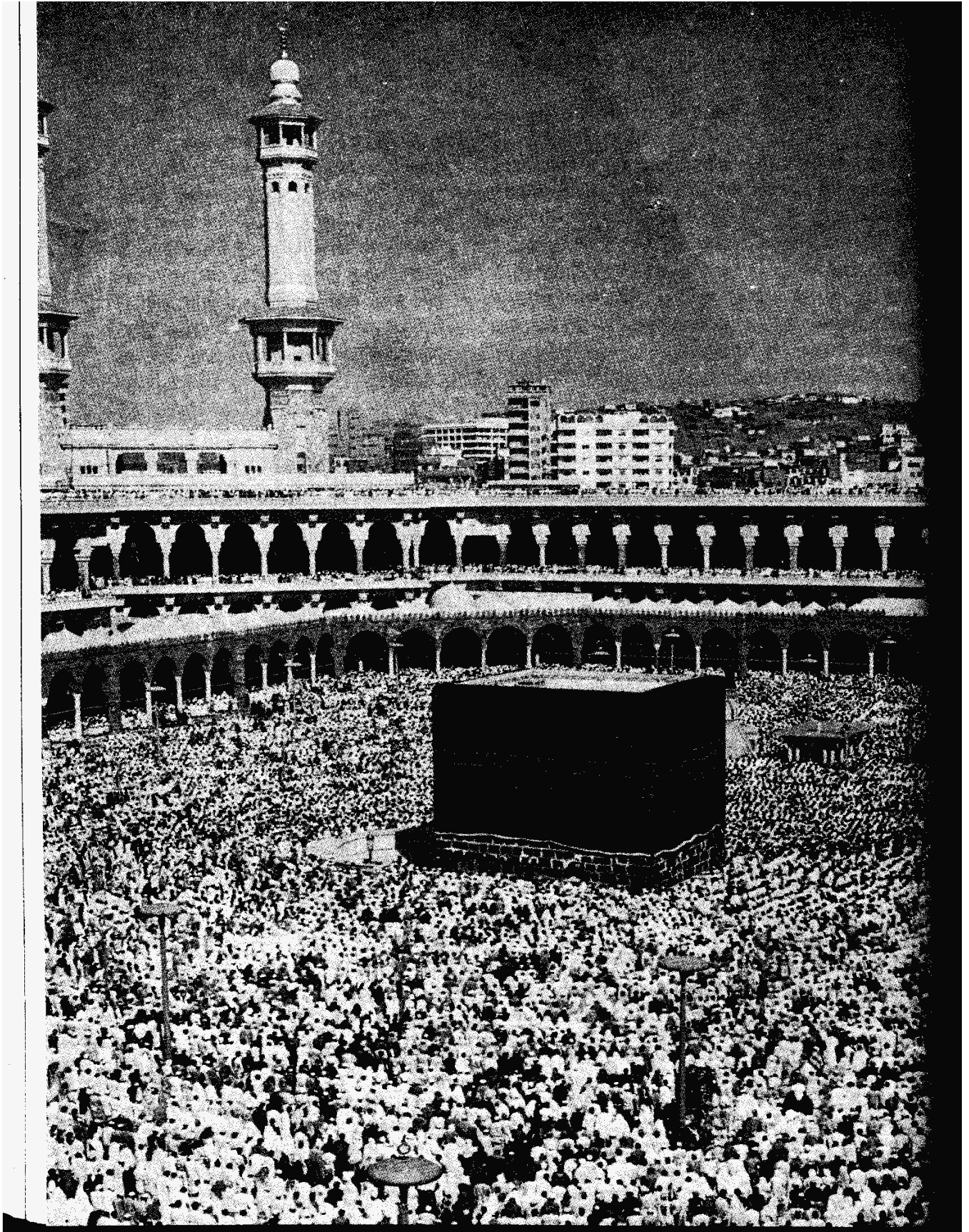
Today, world' events throw a great responsibility on believers to fill the ideological vacuum facing humanity. In the present age, this is the Muslims' most imperative duty, for it is the only path to salvation in this world and the next.

5 June 1992

### It is a wise man who fears God

“Wisdom comes from fear of God,” said Abdullah ibn Masud. Commenting on the verse of the Quran, “He grants wisdom unto whom He will,” Abul Aliyah said that here wisdom meant fear’ of God, for true wisdom could come only from fear of God.”

(Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*)



## The Spirit of Hajj

Hajj may be defined as a rehearsal for purposeful living. Such was Ibrahim's life when he fulfilled the divine mission 4000 year ago; living a purposeful life, he set an ideal example for posterity. The stages Ibrahim had to go through in the process are what are symbolically observed by a Haji. During a specified period a Haji repeats the historic events of Ibrahim's life, thus renewing his zeal to emulate him. He will reflect in his living what Ibrahim had done in his time.

The rituals of Hajj are, in reality, the different stages of this purposeful kind of life. What one has to go through, having opted for such a life, had already been experienced in totality by Ibrahim. In every age, the faithful have to repeat the entire ritual in order to live a similar life. The true Haji is one who performs the rites of Hajj with this intention, and experiencing such sentiments.

A purposeful life demands first of all, a conscientious decision. This is outwardly reflected in the Haji's resolve to perform the prescribed rituals clothed in *ihram*. Another prerequisite is the expenditure of money for God's cause. Movement is a must for the fulfillment of a purpose; its pursuit entails traveling from one place to another in order to visit *Hijaz*. A Haji reflects upon this when he spends his honestly earned money on the journey he undertakes.

A sense of purposeful implies a focal point around which one's life is to be arranged. A Haji prepares himself for this by circumambulating the Ka'aba, for a life such as Ibrahim led necessitates constant activity. A Haji covers the distances between Safa and Marwa at a quickened pace to demonstrate his willingness for active participation.

A man with a purpose willingly sacrifices whatever is necessary to attain his goal. A Haji shows such willingness by sacrificing an animal. A man with a purpose also allies himself with men with a common cause in order to make his movement stronger and more effective. A Haji on the Plain of Arafat demonstrates along with others the same feeling of unity and solidarity.

Hajj is not the end. It is just the beginning. It begins in the places of Hajj and completes its cycle with the return of the Haji to the activities of his day-to-day existence.

Ibrahim's vision was one of dawah and reform. His was a divine mission, to which he devoted his whole life. Hajj, in fact, is neither more nor less than the resolve to revive the sunnah of Ibrahim. The true Haji is the one who returns from his pilgrimage filled with this resolve and the accompanying appropriate sentiments.

Ibrahim spent a long time in Iraq preaching God's religion. But the people there were so deep in the cult of polytheism that they "Were not willing to believe in the one God. They had been under the polytheistic influence of their culture for so many centuries that the only solution to the problem lay in

raising an entirely new community whose members should be free of this influence. There being then no perversion of their character through the materialistic culture of their surroundings, they would accept the concept of one God, and become the upholders of true religion.

In order to raise such a community, Ibrahim settled his son, Ismail, in the desert of Arabia. It was there, cut off from civilization and in natural surroundings that a new race called Ismaelites came into being. These are the same people who believed in the last Prophet and entered the fold of Islam. Deriving strength from their unitedness, they brought about a revolution on the basis of monotheism all over the then inhabited world.

There is again a need today to revive the tradition of Ibrahim to serve the ends of *daw'ah*. Once again there is a need for a team of missionary workers to spread the message of Islam throughout the length and breadth of the globe. The time has once again come for people to give their sons in the service of the faith, just as Ibrahim gave his son for the cause of God.

History was made before with just such a sacrifice. And history will only repeat itself today if a similar sacrifice is made for God's religion.

New opportunities are opening up for the propagation of God's religion. Various facts are responsible for creating a desire to know the divine truth. Now is the time for Muslims to avail of the opportunity to visit the different countries of the world, carrying with them the message of this divine truth. But this opportunity will not be availed for the simple reason that we do not have sufficient trained persons who could effectively undertake this task.

Judging by the present state of affairs, it is clear what we have to do to revive the tradition of Ibrahim. The first and most important step is to open a large-scale training institute for dawah workers. There, in addition to the comparative study of religions, they would learn to speak and write foreign languages, and would be taught the history of the different countries and races. Having equipped themselves with the necessary knowledge, they would then spread themselves right across the world, just as the Muslims did in the early stages of the propagation of Islam.

It would, of course, be a great sacrifice on the part of parents to have their sons admitted to an institution of this kind. But if the tradition of Ibrahim is to be revived, such a sacrifice will be absolutely necessary. Taking their sons there would be, for the Hajis professing their faith in the tradition of Ibrahim, like setting them in the infertile valleys of Arabia. (14:37)

Today, a Haji need not take his son to a desert to settle him. What he must do is remove his son from such employment as will bring him only personal, material gains, and place him in the service of *deen* (religion). He should, moreover impart Islamic knowledge to his son, along with a knowledge of contemporary languages and other useful subjects. He should then give him the opportunity to emerge from his surrounding in order to go into the world where he will in the most forceful manner attract the attention 'of large numbers of people to the divine truth.

Today, Islam needs fresh members for its team. Assembling a new team means making the kind of sacrifice that Ibrahim made. What else are the rites of Hajj but a universal proclamation of this great need? Is there anyone who will respond to this call? Is there anyone who will volunteer for this cause and revive the traditions of Ibrahim so that the history of Islam may be rewritten?

This is the spirit of Hajj. This is the spirit which must be kept alive by the Hajjis.



## A Matter of Cost

“One who wants to conquer Mount Everest never counts the cost of his shoes.”

This means that if you have a minor goal before you, ordinary efforts will suffice to achieve it. But if you have a major goal before you, you must realise that you will have to pay heavily for its achievement. One who wants to achieve greatness must be willing to pay a high price.

Outstanding success is no one's monopoly. Anyone and everyone can be a super-achiever. Even so, we find very few people who have managed to reach the upper rung of the ladder of success. The reason is not far to seek. They are simply not willing to pay the price. Just as small items in the market are low-priced and bigger items are high-priced, so are the 'goods' of life low and high-priced. There is a principle operative in life according to which what one receives corresponds exactly to what one has paid - neither more nor less.

But 'paying the price' does not mean fighting and bloodshed. Nor is it concerned with money. It has to do with psychology. The greatest price in this world is that which is paid at the psychological level. It means tolerating unpleasantness, remaining unruffled in the face of provocation, treating others fairly despite their unfair treatment of oneself, not becoming discouraged in an adverse situation, remaining hopeful in spite of recurrent losses, seeing the bright side of things even when there is darkness all around.

The greatest sacrifice is to extinguish the flames of anger and revenge which rage within oneself. One who can master his feelings in this way will never bear a grudge against anyone who harms him; when faced with a negative situation, he will respond positively and, rather than become engulfed in an unfavourable environment, he will rise above it.

Contributed by Maulana Faridul Wahidi of Jeddah.

## Why I Embraced Islam

I am often asked when and why I became a Muslim, i.e. one who is in harmony with the decrees of the Author of this world. I can only reply that I do not know the precise moment when the truth of Islam dawned upon me. (The word 'Islam' means surrender to God. It also means peace.) It seems that I have always been a Muslim. Not that Islam is a natural religion that a child, left to itself, would develop. Indeed, as once described by a Western critic, "Islam is the religion of common sense."

The more I read and the more I studied, the more convinced I became that Islam, being the most practical religion, was the one most calculated to solve the world's many perplexing problems, and to bring to humanity - peace and happiness. Since then I have never wavered in my belief that there is but one God; that Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and others (peace be on all of them) were prophets, divinely inspired, that to every nation God has sent an apostle, that we are not born in sin, that we are in no need of redemption, that we do not need anyone to intercede between us and God, whom we can approach at all times, that no one can intercede for us – not even Muhammad or Jesus – and that our salvation depends entirely on ourselves and on our actions.

Islam is based on two fundamental truths: (a) the oneness of God and (b) the Brotherhood of Man, and is entirely free from any encumbrances of theological dogma. Above everything else it is a positive faith.

The Hajj, above everything else, makes for unity among Muslims. If there is anything that unifies the scattered forces of Islam and imbues them with mutual sympathy it is the pilgrimage. It provides them with a central point to which they rally from all corners of the earth. It creates for them annually an occasion to meet and know one another, to exchange views and compare experiences and unite their various efforts for the common good. Distances are annihilated. Differences of sect are set aside. Divergences of race and colour cease to exist in this fraternity of faith that unites all Muslims in one great brotherhood and makes them conscious of the glorious heritage that is theirs.

To be a member of that huge congregation gathered from the four corners of the earth, on this – sacred occasion and on the sacred spot, and to join with this mass of humanity, in all humility, in the glorification of God, is to have one's consciousness impressed by full significance of the Islamic ideal. It is to be privileged to participate in one of the most soul-inspiring experiences that have ever been granted to human beings. To visit the birthplace of Islam, to tread the sacred ground of the Prophet's struggle, to call erring humanity back to God, to re-live those hallowed memories of Muhammad's (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa Sallam') long toil and sufferings in his glorious years of sacrifice and martyrdom, is to have one's soul kindled by celestial fire of his peace with God and His creatures.

To create a healthy social order, Islam laid great stress on protecting the honour of every individual. It forbade people to accept scandalous news without fully ascertaining the facts, (49: 6). In case he was in possession of the facts, a man was obliged to give evidence to help others (2: 283): but false evidence before a court of law was made a cognizable crime. (24: 4).

Islam thus guaranteed justice to every individual. In order to ensure its implementation, man's action was divided into his duty towards God – *Huququllah* – and his duty towards His creatures – *Huququl-Ibad*. God may forgive him who fails in performing his duties towards the Almighty, but he who commits a sin against his fellow beings will never be forgiven unless the persons concerned forgive him.

(Lady Eyelyn Zeinab Cobbold, England)

12 June 1992

### Bearing with minor afflictions

Umayr ibn Hubaib admonished his son: "Avoid the company of fools and bear with them when they strew your path with difficulties; for one who cannot bear their trifling misdeeds, will soon find that he has to bear far greater affliction."

(Al- Taoarani')

## Man's Helplessness

Bangladesh is a conglomeration of a great number of islands. Often severe tempests and cyclones hit the area, leaving immeasurable damage to life and property in their wake. According to records to date, the severest known storms took place in 1876, which left 300,000 persons dead, with commensurate losses in terms of property.

Bangladesh was again hit by a storm in May, 1985. Cyclones of high velocity with the speed of 150 mph hit nearly 1000 littoral islands, which at the same time were lashed by four metre high tidal waves. Nearly 100,000 lost their lives in this typhoon. Scores of villages perished in the stormy waves. One press reporter describes the scene thus:

"Urir Char.... looks like it has been bombed relentlessly. Not a single structure, save the concrete forest office stands erect. In fact so fierce has been the force of the gale and tidal waves that not only the houses, but even the building materials have been washed away, leaving behind just mounds."

One English newspaper, dated May 29, 1985, describes these destructive forces as "murderous cyclones which expose man's helplessness before nature's fury."

Incidents such as these help man to keep the reality in mind. They are a declaration of God's power and man's helplessness. They tell us that tomorrow God will catch hold of us as He has done today. If in the present world man suffers from such helplessness, how strange will be his fate when he has to face the consequences of his sins in the eternal life?

13 June 1992

### Being conscious of one's own faults, not of others

Although Rabi 'ibn Khyathama never used to speak ill of anybody, he once remarked upon people's extraordinary habit of fearing God with regard to other people's sins, but not with regard to their own.

(Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*)

## A Realistic Step

According to the Russian writer, Maxim Gorky, (1868 to 1936) labour is the foundation of a culture. He further says that “if everyone labours hard on his own small piece of land, this world will become a wonderful place.”

What he says is absolutely right. Everyone has a sphere in which it is possible for him to work, and if he works hard, he will be found to achieve his full potential within that sphere. Then, if everyone in the world were to set about achieving the optimum results within his own limitations, the general changes would be startling. With everyone striving their utmost to complete their tasks, progress would be visible on every side.

But man is not content to work his own small piece of land. He targets the “bigger piece of land” that belongs to others. Instead of discharging his own practical responsibilities, he demands that others do this for him.

Such a course of action is nothing short of destructive. If it is followed by large numbers of individuals, this will create the kind of society where the air will be filled with hollow utterances, and where the whole field of action will remain barren. The ocean is made of drops. The whole is made up of its parts. Similarly, society is made up of many different individuals. It is only if every individual gives of his best in terms of proper behaviour and hard work that the collective results of such activity can have its impact on the quality of society as a whole. Without individual integrity, there can be no societal progress.

A humble start is far better than talk of achieving great goals. There is something within everyone's reach that he can achieve, but if he clamours for ‘the whole’, this may be counter-productive. The programme has to be realistic. And if it is not so, it is no programme.

14 June 1992

## The day of death will be the great awakening

“People are asleep; when they die, they will awaken.” Thus spoke the Prophet.



## Looking at the Reality

In the eighth century, Muslims dominated the western nations, thanks to their superiority in industrial and military fields. Today it is the turn of the west, now superior to Muslims in all practical and theoretical fields, to dominate them. This reversal of rules is in strict accordance with the laws of nature. Our world being one of trial the weak will invariably be subjugated by the strong.

The need of the hour is to make Muslims aware of the changes that have taken place, and to help them revitalise themselves so that they may become the masters and not the slaves of modern circumstances. But Muslim leaders are setting about this in the wrong way. For the last one hundred years they have done nothing but protest and complain, and incite others to do the same. This is because of their misconception of the reason for the change in world leadership. They have mistakenly attributed this to western plots rather than to natural law, and have, therefore, squandered much time and effort in trying to unearth foreign conspiracies. They have no awareness of the inconsequence of their actions and continue to engage in empty verbal exercises.

Their real task should be to focus Muslim attention on contemporary changes so that they may prepare themselves to deal with them effectively. For this, the general Muslim public must be encouraged to consolidate and fortify themselves. Only then will they be able to meet modern requirements. If nothing so far has been achieved in these areas, it is because so much valuable time has been wasted in voicing complaints.

The thinking of most Muslims in modern times has gone awry because of the wrong guidance given by leaders who can see things only in terms of plots and protests, who are incapable of grasping the hard reality of nature. With this flawed mentality, such leaders can only launch direct verbal assaults on their supposed enemies. And with what effect? No one knows whether this even disturbs their sleep at night.

## Worldly Gain: Spiritual Loss

A friend I met recently, Asha Sharma by name, mentioned how well a mutual friend, Divya, had done in landing a job with a big company; which brought her a salary of Rs. 7000 a month. But then, as Asha remarked, Divya seemed to have lost interest in outings and socialising because she had become so preoccupied with her office work. She didn't even feel like spending time with her husband and children. Divya had not said any of this in a grudging tone. It was simply that her mind had become so tuned to her office work that she had stopped missing her social activities.

The story of Divya made me think about this willingness to become so totally absorbed in mundane activities for a high monthly salary. Here was someone who was prepared to put her heart and soul into her work, to set all other loyalties aside, to become totally absorbed in it to the exclusion of all other human considerations. And for what? For a salary of Rs. 7000 per month. Even in the knowledge that she would have a limited period of 25 to 30 her total lifespan – she felt it necessary to undertake her work with the utmost dedication.

All around us we find examples of like-minded people, engrossed body and soul in their work – devoted to the banalities of commerce. Ask anyone of them to help God's cause, however, and you will be met with indifference or, at best with half-heartedness. There will be no zeal and dedication here. And whatever little help is offered in terms of effort or money will be regarded by the donor as more than enough. There will be no parallel with the lady who is not satisfied just by working at her office, and who continues to be preoccupied by her work even at home. There will be no show of the kind of interest which develops when one is wholeheartedly devoted to the task in hand.

But why is there such a lack of fervour for non-material goals? This seems very strange when we all know that the rewards God has promised to give for working for His cause are hundreds of thousands of times higher than worldly rewards for everyday tasks. Even a single moment spent in this world on furthering God's cause is valued at much more than a mere seven thousand rupees. Then why do people fail to show equal seriousness and devotion in purely spiritual matters? The answer is perhaps not far to seek. Worldly returns bring immediate and obvious benefits. It requires no special perceptiveness to grasp this: But, to understand the benefits to be conferred in the Hereafter, one needs to have patience, wisdom and, above all, insight.

People only pay lip service to their belief in God and the Hereafter, for all their attention is focused on this world and its gains. That is why they are all too willing to devote themselves to any job in this world which will bring them a few thousand rupees, regardless of the fact that this may lose them the limitless 'thousands' of the world to come.

Dr. Farida Khanam

### Hastening to pray in times of difficulty

It was the time of the Battle of the Trench and, according to Hudhayfah, there were three hundred Muslims under siege. Recalling what a hard night it was, he recounts how they were surrounded by Abu Sufyan's army on one side and the Banu Qurayzah on the other, both posing a threat to the safety of the Muslim families. "The cold was already quite intense and, when a storm blew up, there was thunder and lightning everywhere and stones hurtling and crashing in the wind. It was almost impossible to see anything. Just then the Prophet came and asked me to cross the trench and penetrate the enemy camp to collect information. It was essential to know if they were planning to prolong the siege or return to Mecca. I was the most timid of men and was extremely sensitive to the cold. Still, on receiving the Prophet's command, I immediately arose, he prayed for my safety, and I set off. I went hither and thither in Abu Sufyan's camp and was able to bring back the news that they were discussing plans to leave. On my return, I found the Prophet covered in his sheet, praying. Whenever the Prophet was confronted with some arduous task, he would begin to pray." (*Al-Bid'ah wa al-Nihayah*)

## Opposite ways of Thinking

Frederick Langbridge, the English poet, was born in 1849 and died in 1923. One of his couplets reads:  
Two men look out through the same bars. One sees the mud, and one the stars.

The same theme has been more exquisitely expressed by a Persian poet in this couplet:

The difference between you and me is one of hearing. You hear the sound of a door shut while I hear the sound of a door open. (Both hear the sound of a door, one takes it to be the sound of a closed door, the other hears the sound of an opened door).

If a bush has thorns, it also has flowers. The same is true of social circumstances. The adverse and the favourable will always exist side by side. But the man who sets his sights on mere appearances is likely to see only what is unfavourable. He is likely to see the thorns, but not the flowers. It takes a man with insight to go beyond appearance, to discover what is inherently favourable in any given situation.

In this world, mud and stars exist side by side. What is important is *who* sees the former and *who* sees the latter. Just as the same sound of the door is differently interpreted by a wise man and a foolish man. To the former it is the sound of a door opening, whereas to the latter it is the sound of a door closing.

All such misconceptions originate in the mind. But then the mind itself can rid itself of them. It is just a question of embarking on the right course of thinking.

The truth is that the world itself is a test of intelligence. One who uses his intelligence will win through against all odds, while one who fails to do so can expect nothing but destruction.

A man who crosses the seas in a boat can seldom do so without being lashed by the waves and buffeted by high winds. But if he wants to reach his destination, he has to learn to brave these difficulties. Similarly, the animals of the jungle have to learn to live among thorny shrubs and predatory enemies, for no jungle is without these adverse factors.

The case of the individual in society is very similar. There is no end to the unpleasantness between people because of clashes of interest. There will always be differences between people because of the differences in people. That is a continuing situation and simply has to be lived with.

In such circumstances the only way for a man to lead a successful life is to follow the 'in spite of' principle. That is, in spite of all opposition, he must attempt to incline people in his favour; in spite of there being a great deal of unpleasantness in this life, he must learn the secret of harmonious living; in spite of the plots being hatched against him, he must forge ahead with conviction. He must learn that he can nullify all that is negative by being one hundred per cent positive.

In this world man has to reach the flowers despite the thorns. He has to make himself healthy and sturdy despite the presence of innumerable germs. Similarly he should not become depressed in the face of unfavourable circumstances. Neither should he waste time in protests and complaints.

He must learn to cope with things and live with circumstances he cannot change. He must learn to sidestep the stones in his way. He must learn to settle matters by strategy rather than become provoked by antagonism. He must learn to be patient with his enemies, so that they may become the friends of the future.

It would, of course, be a great sacrifice on the part of parents to have their sons admitted to an institution of this kind. But if the tradition of Ibrahim is to be revived, such a sacrifice will be absolutely necessary. Taking their sons there would be for the Hajis professing their faith in the tradition of Ibrahim, like settling them in the then infertile valleys of Arabia (14:37.)

19 June 1992

## One's trust in God is one's greatest strength

"He who would be the strongest of men should put his trust in God."

(Sayings of Saints)

## Extraordinary People

"In battle there are no ordinary-soldiers; they are all extraordinary." So says Bruce Van Voovst, a veteran American journalist with a fine reputation as a war correspondent, who has visited actual battlefields and sent on-the-spot reports of the war of the Dominican Republic, the uprising of Iranian revolutionaries against the Shah, the Iraq-Iran war and the Gulf war.

*Time* Magazine of February 4, 1991, published some of his experiences, one of which was directly concerned with the integrity and personal qualities of the soldiers when actually in combat. When the fighting begins, their performance is superlative. Whatever the odds, they carry out their duties superbly.

What this American journalist has said about the soldier in battle being 'extraordinary' applies equally to all men in challenging situations. Man, by birth, has been endowed with great potential. In ordinary, everyday situations this potential remains untapped. But, whenever there is danger, a challenge, all his slumbering potential is awakened. If, prior to this emergency, only one bulb of the powerhouse was on, now all of its bulbs light up.

Now his brain races, his body is charged with renewed energy. His whole being takes on a heroic character, for challenges transform the weak into the strong, the foolish into the clever. Challenge may appear in the guise of a setback, but as far as its results are concerned, it is the greatest ladder to success. Before the challenge, all men are ordinary human beings, whereas after the challenge they become extraordinary. Supreme progress indeed.

Where, before the challenge, there had appeared to be no scope for advancement, after it, opportunities are legion.

Let us take the example of the young Muslim who went to stay with relatives settled in the U.S.A. After the completion of his education there, he took up a job for a period of two years. Then, feeling that he would like to go back to his own country to build his future, he returned to India.

When I met him some time after his return, he told me that he had been suffering from mental frustration ever since he had come home. All his friends and relatives had kept on telling him what a foolish mistake he had made in leaving the U.S.A. where there is much greater scope for a talented, qualified person than there is here in India.

My answer to that was that the very opposite was true. "There is scope in India for the very simple reason that there *appears* to be no scope. That is because you are considering external rather than internal opportunities. The former relates to those opportunities that exist outside you, in the external world. While the latter relates to the natural capabilities of body and mind bestowed upon you by God. If you take stock of these qualities within you, you will begin to see opportunities all around you which you

never imagined existed. Every opportunity for success which is available in the U.S.A. exists in equal measure in India. And, in fact, with the challenges posed by the Indian environment one can make even greater progress here than in the U.S.A.”

This is not immediately obvious to people because their sights are usually set on external opportunities. This is why they are quick to point out that opportunities exist everywhere but on their own doorstep. What they fail to appreciate is the importance of the latent capabilities bestowed upon man by nature. That factor is much more important than mere opportunities.

It is only when man is challenged by life's difficulties that his latent potential begins to awaken. He is awakened from his slumber by the shock of circumstances. This awakening in his life is essential if he is to make any progress. If scope in America signifies the existence of external opportunities, scope in India means the kind of challenge which will awaken a man's potential to the full. The latter is far more precious than the former.



21 June 1992

### Justice for all

Muawiyah asked Dharar Sadai to tell him about Ali. Amongst other things, Dharar told him that he lived among them just like anyone of them. "If a powerful man were in the wrong, he could not hope to sway Ali, but if a weak person sought justice, he could certainly hope to have it."

22-23 June 1992

## Islam and the challenges of the world

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am grateful to the organizers of this international conference for giving us the opportunity to be here this morning to discuss a very important and interesting subject: "Islam and the Challenges of the World:"

It is a fact that Islam is facing some kind of challenges in the present world. Political challenges, economic challenges, and so on. But in my opinion, these particular challenges are not so very important.

The most important challenge is that which is intellectual in nature, while other challenges are mini-challenges, it is the intellectual challenge which is the super-challenge.

To be precise, what I mean by 'intellectual challenge' is scientific atheism. This challenge has always been the greatest, because it seeks to prove that Islam, or, for that matter, any kind of religion, is baseless.

It was scientific atheism which proclaimed in the 19th century that "God is dead". It said that there was no divine revelation, no heaven or hell; religion was nothing but the "opium of the people."

Let me explain in brief what scientific atheism is, and why it succeeded in persuading so many people to accept it as a proven fact.

For example, when scientists studied nature, they found that behind every event there was a cause. When an apple fell from a tree, it fell because of the gravitational pull of the earth. So scientific atheism proclaimed that if events followed on from natural causes, they were not supernatural in origin.

Under the shadow of the philosophy, there flourished several anti-religious ideologies, such as logical positivism, Marxian materialism, the theory of evolution, etc. They jointly claimed that religion was now out of date and that modern scientific enquiry had destroyed it at its very roots.

But, by the grace of God, there came an intellectual counter-revolution in the scientific world. This occurred after the second world war. Now, as you know, microcosmic studies of nature have destroyed those notions which were hastily supposed to be facts in the course of previous studies of nature at the macrocosmic level.

Marxism, the most dreadful enemy of religion, is being demolished even in the U.S.S.R. The present generation of the communist society is saying that it was Marxism, not religion, which was the "opium of the people."

Truth, ultimately, has prevailed, and God is back again at the top of the agenda. But what has been achieved to date is only the first half; the second half is yet to be achieved. I mean that scientific atheism has been theoretically destroyed, but has not in practice been eliminated. Now the task ahead is to turn the potential into actual.

I may add that it is men of considerable distinction who have started this intellectual jihad (crusades). They have done much to avail of the present opportunity and to make full use of scientific materials in favour of religion. It is heartening to note that the modern religious community has produced so many able scientists who are working towards this end such as Sir James Jeans, Arthur Eddington, Alexis Carrel, Gessy Morison, Alfred Hoyle, Stephen Hawking, etc. They have done a great deal in this field, showing how to avail of this opportunity to re-establish through the field of science.

In this perspective, this kind of religious gathering here in Malta has great importance. Here we can decide to work jointly and, I hope, successfully in this field of common interest.

It is true that there are some differences in the various religious beliefs and practices, at the same time; it is also true that scientific atheism is our common enemy. We have to unite and work in harmony so that this common enemy may be buried for ever.

In conclusion, I venture to propose that an inter-religious conference be held on this very subject. And may I say that it would be good if such a conference could be held in some Muslim country.

I thank you all, May God bless Us and help Us to serve His cause. Amen.

This paper was presented at the conference entitled: "Religion for a Sea of Peace" held at Malta on October 8, 1991.

## Always on the brink

P. V. Venkateshwaran who was chief marketing engineer in a government firm attended a meeting held on the eighth floor of the Gopala Tower in New Delhi on May 29, 1982. When the meeting was over, he walked towards the lift along with some of his colleagues. As the door was open, he thought that the lift had arrived, but it was actually still on the ninth floor. In an excited state of mind, at the success of the decisions taken at the meeting, he paid no attention to where he was walking, and stepped into the empty lift shaft. He fell straight to the ground from the eighth floor. His personal doctor, who had been with him at the time, could do nothing for him. He could only declare him dead. He was 51 years old at the time of his death. (*The Hindustan Times*, 30 May, 1982)

Venkateshwaran was an extremely successful officer. These are the words in which he was described in an official journal: "A thoroughbred professional and a dashing, innovative manager with fire in his belly and ideas in his mind, an astute general. "

So far as this world is concerned, the case of Venkateshwaran is unique. But, from the point of view of the life hereafter, there is little about it that is uncommon. Everyone, confident of his wisdom and the worldly success it brings, fearlessly walks straight ahead, heedless of the fact that at any moment he can plunge headlong into the pit of doom. To utter insulting words against others, to oppress the weak and the innocent, to take revenge, to be unjust to others, to ridicule others' failures, to argue without reason – all such evils are like stepping into the empty lift shaft on the eighth floor. Every such step can plunge man headlong into the pit of destruction. It is then that neither his friends nor his wishful thinking will save him – everyone is on the brink of that lift shaft, while convinced that he is holding fast to a firm rock which will never fail him.

### Refraining from mockery

When the Prophet reached Tabuk, and found the Ka'ab ibn Malik was not among the Muslim force, he said: "What has become of Ka'ab?" A member of the Banu Salma tribe said that Ka'ab was too busy admiring his shawls and his shoulders. Mu'az ibn Jabal said in response, "That is a very nasty thing to say," and then addressing the Prophet he said: "Truly, we know nothing but good of Ka'ab."

## The gathering storm

On August the 11th, 1979, a flash flood struck Maurvi in Gujarat, leaving total devastation in its wake. Due to heavy rain the water level rose so high in a huge dam on the bank of the settlement that the dam broke. In the words of one who witnessed it, "About 20 feet high walls of water entered the settlement with such high velocity that no one could escape from their onslaught. In a few hours time, this flood water having destroyed all animate and inanimate objects receded as suddenly as it came." It is estimated that, out of a total population of about 40,000, as many as 25,000 died in this flash flood. The extent of the destruction can be gauged from the fact that, besides public contributions, the central government immediately released 5 crore rupees as aid to the government of Gujarat.

Arun Kumar, a reporter of the Hindustan Times, published an eye-witness report in which he said that the survivors had a woeful tale to tell. Still in the grip of the shock and suffering that the flood had inflicted upon them, "Some have lost their speech and look absolutely dazed and blank." (19 August, 1979). Another report (20 August, 1979) recounts how overjoyed a ruined landlord was when he was handed over Rs. 18,000 in cash and gold ornaments weighing 225 grams which had been restored to him from his house by government officials.

Such events occur frequently on earth to remind man of the day of judgment. The great flood to herald the end of the world will overtake us suddenly. The destruction will be such that people's tongues will fail them. They will be absolutely dazed. There will be those who, realizing their eternal doom will be struck dumb. But there will also be those who will be given the good tidings that the encompassing flood of death and destruction will leave them unscathed. Not only will God restore to them what is theirs, but will shower them with even greater blessings. The flash flood of that Day will condemn some to hell fire while it will usher others to the gates of eternal happiness. Before the "flood", man could easily find eloquent excuses to justify his cruel ways. But, on seeing the "flood of destruction", all his strength will desert him and he will have no words to justify the unjust actions that he perpetrated in the world he has left behind him.